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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EI) AND SPORT SCIENCE: A SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF NEED, IMPORTANCE AND APPLICATION OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN ATHLETICS

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#### Abstract

Sports Psychology research has seen the increase in a concept named emotional intelligence. First utilized in the business world, Emotional Intelligence is finding its way into other areas of life such as sports. What is it, how can it help sports performance and how can we enhance our own emotional intelligence? Emotional intelligence is a relatively new construct that has emerged over the last ten years. Identified as 'the capacity to recognize and utilize emotional states to change intentions and behaviors. Emotional intelligence can be measured through a series of statements about emotional states and the ways that a person deals with them.

Success in sport is often associated with vigor and anger. Importantly, emotionally intelligent people can get themselves into the appropriate emotional states for the demands of the situation. If the situation requires high arousal, emotionally intelligent people are good at getting themselves psyched up and prepared. Equally, if the situation requires calmness, emotionally intelligent people are good at relaxing themselves. Athletes that perform in the zone effectively regulate their emotions.

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**“For years we have marveled at how the great athletes are able to “switch themselves on” to create amazing performances with incredible consistency. We would describe them as being composed, mentally tough, having the right psychology, a great sports mind, emotionally controlled or simply determined or focused. Today we recognize these athletes as having high levels of competency in the area of emotional intelligence.”**

**- Bo Hanson (Four-time Olympian)**

Sports Psychology research has seen the increase in a concept named emotional intelligence. First utilized in the business world, Emotional Intelligence is finding its way into other areas of life such as sports. What is it, how can it help sports performance and how can we enhance our own emotional intelligence? Emotional intelligence is a relatively new construct that has emerged over the last ten years. Identified as 'the capacity to recognize and utilize emotional states to change intentions and behaviors. Emotional intelligence can be measured through a series of statements about emotional states and the ways that a person deals with them.

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Research looking at the nature of emotional intelligence has found that emotionally intelligent people use psychological skills such as imagery; goal setting and positive self-talk more often than their less emotionally intelligent counterparts. It was found that emotionally intelligent people are mentally tough and also that they find exercise enjoyable. Importantly, it seems that emotional intelligence can be enhanced through suitably developed intervention packages.

## HISTORY OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The historical roots of emotional intelligence can actually be traced back to the nineteenth century when Darwin worked on the importance of emotional expression for survival and adaptation. The importance of the relationship between emotion and cognition was already recognized by the earlier philosophers as well as psychologists. Two thousand years ago, Socrates declared that the attainment of self knowledge is greatest challenge. Aristotle added that this challenge was about managing our emotional life with intelligence. According to Spinoza, both the emotion and the intellect together contribute to the ultimate cognitive tool. He talked about three levels of cognition (or knowledge), that are:-

- 1) Emotional cognition,
- 2) Intellectual cognition and
- 3) A kind of intuition.

**Ellis** points out that human emotion and thinking are not separate processes, but that they significantly overlap and can never be viewed completely apart from each other. **Tomkins** believed that “**reason without affect would be impotent and affect without reason would be blind.**” The foundation of emotional intelligence had already laid down by earlier psychologists and philosophers, when **Edward Thorndike** identified his concept of social intelligence in the year 1920. Further in 1940s **Wechsler** suggests that affective components of intelligence may be essential to success in life. Humanistic psychologists such as **Maslow** (1954) describe how people can build emotional strength in his ‘theory of self actualization’. This is relevant to emotional intelligence, by knowing that self-actualizers naturally have stronger EQ. Those peoples who are struggling to meet lower order needs tend to have lower emotional intelligence than self actualizes.

‘**Alexithymia**’, from the Greek, meaning ‘no words or feelings’ is a personality construct that has been related theoretically to emotional intelligence. It is an old term in clinical psychology coined by **Sifneos** which consists of difficulty identifying feelings and distinguishing between feelings and the bodily sensations of emotional arousal; difficulty describing feelings to others; constricted imaginal processes, as shown by a lack of fantasy; and a stimulus-bound, externally oriented cognitive style. Therefore, an inverse association is found to be existing between the constructs of alexithymia and emotional intelligence as it neglects positive feelings and focuses on negative emotions.

In the past twenty years, the field of psychology broadened the ‘non-intellective’ paradigm of these early psychologists as, **Howard Gardner** introduced the idea of multiple intelligences in his book “**The Shattered Mind**”, including ‘personal intelligences’ which encompasses intrapersonal intelligence (knowing yourself) and interpersonal intelligence (knowing how to get along with others). Additionally, **Saarni** describes emotional competence as including eight interrelated emotional and social skills. **Mohoney** also states that cognitive constructivists view feeling, knowing and acting as inseparable experiences of our adaptation and development. In the last decade emotional intelligence has received much attention as an aspect that is potentially useful in understanding and predicting individual performance and success in the workplace.

The first academic use of the term ‘emotional intelligence’ is usually attributed to **Wayne Leon Payne**’s doctoral thesis, “**A study of emotion: Developing emotional intelligence**” in the year 1985. Afterwards, in the year 1990, the work of two American university professors, **John. D Mayer** (university of New Hampshire) and **Peter Salovey** (Yale University) was published in two academic journal articles. They were trying to develop a way of scientifically measuring the difference between people’s ability in the area of emotions, and found that some people were better than others at things like identifying their own feelings, identifying the feelings of others, and solving problems involving emotional issues. However, the person most commonly associated with the term ‘emotional intelligence’ is actually a writer and consultant of New York, named **Daneial Goleman**. In 1992 he was doing

research for a book about emotions and emotional literacy when he discovered the 1990 article by **Salovey and Mayer**. Further in 1995 **Goleman**'s book came out under the title "**Emotional Intelligence**" which became an international best seller. Some criticisms have been made regarding Goleman's definition of emotional intelligence, as 'the definition has been broadened to such an extent that it no longer has any scientific meaning or utility'. In his book he collected a lot of interesting information on the brain, emotions and behaviour. On the other hand, **Mayer and Salovey** have been very cautious about making claims as to what emotional intelligence means on a practical level and what it might predict in terms of success, happiness or the ideal member of society.

After reviewing the history of emotional intelligence it can be stated that the theoretical idea behind emotional intelligence is not totally new in the field of psychology. Though emotional intelligence is one of the recent development in the area of intelligence the existing models of emotional intelligence are somewhat overlapping with many other constructs such as social intelligence, intra and interpersonal intelligences, and practical intelligence.

## CONCEPT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

**"A form of intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions".**

**- Salovey and Mayer, 1990**

Emotional intelligence is discovered as a result of series of studies undertaken by researchers and psychologists with an attempt to understand why people who were intellectually the most intelligent are often not the ones who are the most successful in life. It is the ability to sense, understand and effectively apply the power and acumen of emotions as a source of human energy, creativity, innovation, cooperation, communication, collaboration, information and influence.

The concept of emotional intelligence is multifaceted in nature, including individual skills and insights, regarding inter- and intrapersonal factors which influence the competency profile of a person. It implies that humans are both rational and emotional beings. The term 'emotional intelligence', then implies something having to do with the intersection of emotion and cognition. Hence, adaptation and coping abilities in life are dependent on the integrative functioning of both rational and emotional capacities. It involved the ability to reason using emotions and of emotions to enhance reason.

Emotional intelligence is a highly important skill that numerous individuals have accounted for their success. It is a dynamic yet practical concept. It is a set of skills which contribute to the accurate appraisal and expression of emotion, the effective regulation of emotion, and the use of feelings to motivate, plant and achieved the processes involved in the recognition, use, understanding and management of one's own and other's emotional states, to regulate behaviour and solving emotion-laden problems are the core constituents of emotional intelligence. In academic literature various terms have been employed as a substitute for emotional intelligence. Such terms include emotional literacy, emotional competence, emotional maturity and emotional creativity.

Emotional intelligence is closely aligned with emotional literacy and can be described as being about a set of non-cognitive abilities that influence the individual's capacity to succeed in life. It involves the integration of head and heart. The concept of emotional intelligence predominantly deals with the following areas.

- 1) The ability to understand and express emotions constructively.
- 2) The ability to understand other's feelings and establish cooperative interpersonal relationships.
- 3) The ability to manage and regulate emotions in an effective manner.
- 4) The ability to cope realistically with new situations and solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature as they arise, and
- 5) The ability to be sufficiently optimistic, positive and self motivated in order to set and achieve goals.

Therefore, emotional intelligence is the ability to acquire and apply knowledge from our own emotions and the emotions of others in order to be more successful and lead a more fulfilling life. It is the innate potential to feel, use, communicate, recognize, remember, describe, identify, learn from, manage, understand and explain emotions. Researchers assert that emotional intelligence plays an important role to perception how person carries himself and connects with others. Furthermore, people of higher EI succeed at communicating their goals, ideas, and intentions in more interesting and assertive manners. EI creates passion, confidence, friendliness, motivation, pride and energy in individuals. It is the foundational character for the control of undesirable behaviour. Douglas regards the emotional intelligence construct as a forum of social effectiveness, a set of skills enabling one “to read and understand others, and utilize such knowledge to influence others in the pursuit of individual and organizational goal”.

The concept of EI refers to a comprehensive package of individual skills and dispositions, usually considered as soft skills or inter and intrapersonal skills, which make up the competency profile of person. Such skills are beyond the traditional areas of specific knowledge, general intelligence and technical or professional skills. In simple terms, EI can be explained as knowing what feels good, what feels bad and how to get from bad to good. It is the ability to balance emotion and reason so as to maximize productivity and happiness. It is not about being nice all the time; but it is about being honest with our emotions. Moreover, it is not about being touchy-feel, but about being aware of our feelings and those of others. Finally, it is not about being emotional, but it is about being smart with our emotions.

## **COMPONENTS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE:-**

According to Goleman (1998), there are five components of EI important for leaders:

- a) Self-awareness,
- b) Self-regulation,
- c) Motivation,
- d) Empathy, and
- e) Social skill.

Each of the five components of Emotional Intelligence helps in to improve leadership as a coach, and consequently get the most out of your athletes.

### **SELF-AWARENESS**

The first component needed to be an emotionally intelligent coach is self-awareness. Self-awareness is the ability to understand your own moods and emotions, both in terms of their affect on you, and their affect on your athletes. Highly self-aware coaches are confident, have a realistic view of their abilities, and aren't afraid to admit their mistakes. So how could self-awareness have helped the coach (and the athlete) in the above example?

A self-aware coach would realize going into the season that he has a tendency to react harshly when athletes come to him with injuries, and could create a system for reporting and handling injuries that would minimize his aggravation. One strategy to increase self-awareness is to keep a daily journal of your thoughts and feelings at practices and competitions. After every practice and game, take 5-10 minutes to note situations that triggered both facilitative and debilitating thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Be honest with yourself. In time, you will be able to develop a personal profile of your emotions in various practice and game situations. This profile will be useful as you focus on the second component of Emotional Intelligence, the art of regulating your emotions.

### **SELF-REGULATION**

Once you become adept at self-awareness, the next step toward becoming an Emotional Intelligence coach is learning to regulate your emotions. Self-regulation refers to your ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods. A coach who has strong self-regulation skills leads with integrity, is open to change, and promotes a

trustworthy environment. Modeling calmness and rational thinking in the face of adversity sets an example for your athletes to do the same.

The coach in the above example clearly lacked the ability to regulate his emotions. Had he been in control of his emotions, he likely would have modeled much different behaviors in response to setbacks and bad news, and allowed athletes to feel more comfortable in bringing their injuries to the forefront. If the coach does suspect that the athlete is embellishing the injury, rather than lose his temper, he might consider the reasons that the athlete feels the need to lie, get the opinion of other coaches on the staff, and set a meeting with the athletes to discuss any conflicts athletes might have.

## **MOTIVATION**

At first glance, you might question the need to work on your motivation. After all, many coaches are driven to win, and be recognized as one of the best in their sport. But in this case, I am referring to a different kind of motivation. Coaches who enjoy long and successful careers have a passion for coaching that extends beyond social status and records. These coaches love the excitement of competition, and the fulfillment that comes from aiding in the personal and performance development of their athletes. In other words, successful coaches are motivated to coach for the sake of coaching.

The coach that is motivated to promote the well-being of his athletes will be less likely to engage in name-calling in response to an injury or a poor performance, and more likely to focus on how to help his athletes perform to the best of their ability.

## **EMPATHY**

Once you have mastered the personal components of Emotional Intelligence discussed above, you are ready to work on improving your interpersonal Emotional Intelligence. The first interpersonal Emotional Intelligence skill is empathy. Not to be confused with sympathy, which refers to a general feeling of concern for others, empathy goes beyond concern to literally sharing the feelings of others. Coaches who have the ability to empathize are able to build strong relationships with their athletes, and have athletes who are more satisfied with their sport experience.

## **SOCIAL SKILL**

The culmination of the four previously discussed components of EI (i.e., self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, and empathy), is social skill. Coaches who are socially skilled are proficient in managing relationships, and have a knack for persuasion. To build your social skill as a coach, attempt to get to know your athletes in ways that go beyond sport. Be interested in how things are going for your athletes at school, and with their personal life. Get to know all of your athletes by scheduling social gatherings at your home, or a team retreat to the mountains. Making sociability a priority will improve your relationship between you and your athletes, increase team cohesion, and promote team satisfaction.

## **ABILITY MODEL OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

The ability model of emotional intelligence is proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997) and called as pure model by them. This model is also known as 'four branch model'. It may also be termed as cognitive model of Emotional Intelligence because it perceives Emotional Intelligence as a form of pure intelligence, or more specifically a cognitive ability.

### **Graphic Depiction of Mayer and Salovey's (1997) Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence**



This model proposes that individuals vary in their ability to process information of an emotional nature and in their ability to relate emotional processing to a wider cognition. According to this model, Emotional Intelligence is comprised of two areas:-

- i. **EXPERIENTIAL:** - The ability to perceive, respond and manipulate emotional information without necessarily understanding it.
- ii. **STRATEGIC:** - The ability to understand and manage emotions without necessarily perceiving feelings well or fully experiencing them.

Each area is further divided into two branches that range from basic psychological processes to more complex processes integrating emotion and cognition:-

- a) Perception, appraisal and expression of emotion.
- b) Emotional facilitation of thinking.
- c) Understanding and analyzing emotions and employing emotional knowledge.
- d) Reflective regulation of emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

**(a) PERCEPTION APPRAISAL AND EXPRESSION OF EMOTIONS:-**

The first branch of 'EI ability model' talks about the ability to perceive and identify emotions in oneself and others, as well as in other stimuli including people's voices, stories, music and works of art.

Perceiving emotions represents a basic aspect of EI, as it makes all other processing of emotional information possible. It is the ability to be self aware of emotions and to express emotions and emotional needs accurately to others; ability to distinguish between honest and dishonest expressions of emotions. It includes the core capacities of identifying feelings and thoughts through proper and appropriate words in self as well as in others and discriminating between real and unreal emotional expression.

**(b) EMOTIONAL FACILITATION OF THINKING**

The second branch of EI ability model concerns about the ability to use emotions to focus attention and to think more rationally, logically and creatively. It is the ability to harness emotions to facilitate various cognitive activities such as thinking, problem solving, decision making and interpersonal communication. Furthermore, it includes the core abilities of using emotions in appropriate judgment and memory concerning feelings. This ability also includes emotional facilitation to be optimistic, using emotions in tasks requiring reasoning as well as creativity.

**(c) UNDERSTANDING AND ANALYZING EMOTIONS AND EMPLOYING EMOTIONAL KNOWLEDGE**

The third branch of EI involves a fair amount of language and propositional thought to reflect the capacity to analyze emotions. It is the ability to understand complex emotions (feeling two emotions at a time) and the ability to recognize transitions from one to the other. Also, it is the ability to comprehend emotion language and to appreciate complicated relationships among emotions. The core capacities of this branch understand the difference between emotions, the consequences of emotions, identifying complex feelings and understood the transition of emotions.

**(d) REFLECTIVE REGULATION OF EMOTIONS TO PROMOTE EMOTIONAL AND INTELLECTUAL GROWTH**

The ability to regulate moods and emotions in oneself and in other people constitutes the fourth branch of EI model. It is the ability to connect or disconnect from an emotion depending on its usefulness in a given situation. The core capacities of this branch includes the ability to stay open to feelings, capacity to monitor emotions and ability to manage emotions in oneself and others by moderating negative emotions and enhancing pleasant ones, without repressing or exaggerating information they may convey. So, this last branch of Emotional Intelligence ability model concerns about the ability to be open to feelings, to modulate them in oneself and other so as to promote personal understanding and growth.

## **IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

Emotional Intelligence plays a very important role in our emotional social and personal life. By developing EI in childhood stage, one can make a happier and more successful adult. During stressful and terrible situations “emotionally intelligent” people manage their emotions better and react with clearer, more rational minds and make better decisions. In difficult situations, transmitting positive emotions can help people cope with negative circumstances. Emotional Intelligence moderates conflict by promoting understanding and relationships, and fostering stability, continuity and harmony. It also links strongly with concepts of love and spirituality. Emotional Intelligence adds emotional stability that makes us more capable and efficient in establishing successful interpersonal relationships as, it is a requirement for dispute resolution.

When Emotional Quotient is high, one is able to experience feelings fully as they happen. Emotional awareness brings inner world into focus which enables the person to make good choices and how to strike a mutually healthy balance between own needs and that of others. Some of the characteristics of those with high Emotional Quotient, as identified by Hein, encompassed clarity in thoughts and expressions, high optimism, ability to read non-verbal communication, emotional resilience, moral autonomy and high levels of self-motivation. Those people having high emotional intelligence balance their feelings with reason, logic and reality. People with high Emotional Quotient know the art of expressing emotions as much as controlling them whereas, people with lower Emotional Quotient tend to blame others for their feelings and do not articulate their feelings and are more prone to criticize and judge others.

## **APPLICATIONS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

The concept of Emotional Intelligence has found a number of different applications apart from the psychological research arenas. Nowadays, professional, educational and community institutions have integrated different aspects of Emotional Intelligence into their organizations in order to promote more productive working relationships, thereby, gaining better outcomes and enhancing personal satisfaction. Emotional Intelligence has been identified as one of the important behavioral constructs considered to be a major contributor to performance. Professionally hiring and training a staff with high Emotional Intelligence is thought to be helpful in optimizing productivity, teamwork and overall employee satisfaction. It was claimed that Emotional Intelligence accounts for 85 to 90 percent of outstanding performance in the top management, resulting in 20 percent more earning for companies. Emotional Intelligence has also evoked a keen interest among practitioners because of its wide applicability to lots of work place issues including job satisfaction, absenteeism, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship. It is more relevant to important work related outcomes such as individual performance, organizational productivity and developing people because its principles provide a new way to understand and assess the behaviors, attitudes, management styles, interpersonal skills and potential of people. Stress tolerance, leadership, communication, social responsibility, collaboration, creativity and self actualization, all require high emotional intelligence. Moreover, it is an increasingly important consideration in human resource planning, job profiling, recruitment, interviewing and selection, learning and development, client relations and customer service among others.

Emphasis on Emotional Intelligence in the educational field, as in classroom focuses on problem solving, conflict resolution, empathy, coping and communication skills. It is also frequently implemented in violence prevention programs. Additionally, it is valuable in healthcare settings, where both patients and healthcare providers are emotionally charged and stressful as a result of anxiety which arise from physical emotional and perhaps financial challenges (in case of patients) and feeling of under supported, over worked or insufficiently equipped to handle daily challenges (in case of healthcare staff). Application of EI approach may help staff members to more easily and effectively adapt to change and also to meet patient needs.

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